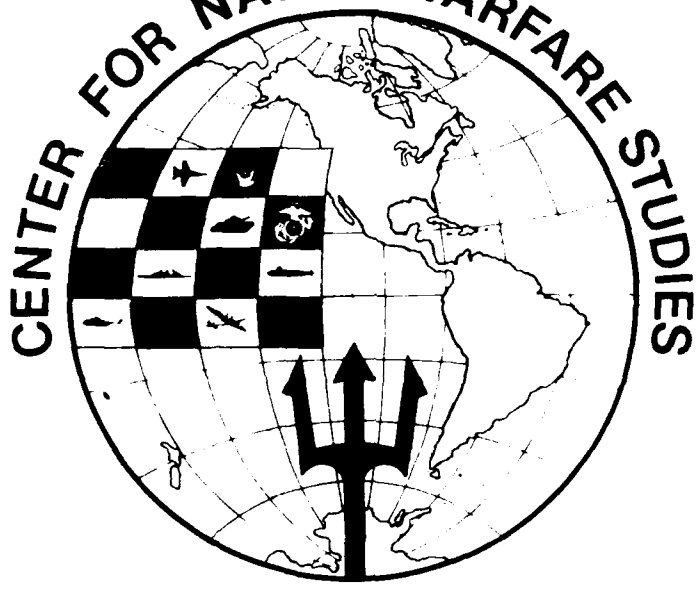
BUSH ADMINISTRATION DEFENSE POLICIES: ISSUES AND POSSIBILITIES



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This paper aims to help the reader understand and predict some of the principal features of Bush Administration defense policies. The paper has four parts. The first lays out the context within which policy decisions are being made. The second characterizes the basic orientation which the Bush Administration brings to defense decision-making. The third looks to what the most important members of that team have said about defense issues as a basis for establishing what Administration policy is or maybe in selected areas. The last contains overall conclusions.

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BUSH ADMINISTRATION DEFENSE POLICIES:

ISSUES AND POSSIBILITIES

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This paper aims to help the reader understand and predict some of the principal features of Bush Administration defense policies. The paper has four parts. The first lays out the context within which policy decisions are being made. The second characterizes the basic orientation which the Bush Administration brings to defense decision-making. The third looks to what the most important members of that team have said about defense issues as a basis for establishing what Administration policy is or may-be in selected areas. The last contains overall conclusions.

CONTEXT

Before addressing what Bush policies are or might be, it is useful to outline some of the choices, pressures, and difficulties facing it in defense. These involve the budget deficit, projected defense costs, changing threat perceptions, pressures from within Congress to revise military commitments, an inherited arms control agenda, and public support for defense.

The overarching issue facing the Bush Administration is how it will lower the budget deficit in the face of huge projected expenditures to deal with heretofore neglected problems. In 1981 Ronald Reagan entered office pledging to increase defense strength, lower taxes, cut back on domestic programs, and lower the deficit. He succeeded in the first

two endeavors, partially succeeded in the third, and failed in the fourth. Indeed, the Reagan years saw such an explosive increase in borrowing as to account for roughly two-thirds of the US Government's two trillion dollar debt. In response, the Congress, itself partly to blame, enacted the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law in 1985 which calls for progressively smaller annual deficits and a balanced budget by 1991. A September 1987 revision pushed back the timetable for eliminating the deficit to 1993. A critical feature of the law is its mandating of budget cuts or "sequesters" if it becomes clear that the actual deficit for any year will exceed the G-R-H target. Half of the sequestered funds are to come out of the defense sector.

The G-R-H maximum for the FY 1990 deficit is one hundred billion dollars (with an additional ten billion allowed as a so-called margin of error). Both the Reagan budget submission and Bush's revision called for overall spending of 1.16 trillion, and, relying on optimistic assumptions, both forecast deficits below the G-R-H target. Many politicians and budget experts, while not as optimistic, accept that the 1990 target can probably be met without sequestration, but they are highly pessimistic about what will happen after that in the absence of either a significant increase in revenue (such as might result from higher taxes) or draconian cuts. In particular, the 1991 deficit target is 64 billion dollars, and as one noted economist, Martin Feldstein, put it: "Congress doesn't have

to do much to get down to [the 1990 target of] $100 billion. But when it shifts to $64 billion in what is likely to be a weaker economy, it's much harder to get there."1 It will be harder yet with 1992's $28 billion deficit ceiling and 1993's balanced budget mandate.

Also making it harder--and some say impossible--is that the Bush Administration has inherited problems which have been ignored or slighted to date. These include the question of insolvent savings and loans institutions (the latest estimates for correcting the problem are $114 billion), the cleanup of hazardous waste pollution at military sites ($14 billion), the remedying of critically unsafe conditions at plants which manufacture ingredients for nuclear weapons ($100 to 130 billion), the modernizing of an overburdened air traffic control system ($25 billion), the overhaul of the nation's bridges and highways ($365 billion), the skyrocketing costs of medical programs (increasing at twice or more the rate of inflation), and the rising interest on the national debt (expected to be $173 billion in FY 1990 alone).2

The projected cost of defense is an issue in its own right. If knowledgeable sources are correct, simply

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1. David Rosenbaum, "Experts on Budget Voicing Optimism on Goal of Deficit But Only for This Year," The New York Times, January 26, 1989, p. D22.
2. Bephen Nordlinger, "Bush Administration to Face Much Higher Costs, GAO Warns," The Baltimore Sun, November 22, 1988, p. 5; David Rapp, "Cutting the Deficit: Tougher Than It Looks," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, November 26, 1988, p. 3381; and "Corrections: Two Plans for 1990," The New York Times, February 14, 1989, p. A 21.

maintaining the status quo in the size, quality, and deployment of American forces will require funding which exceeds the rate of inflation by 3 to 5 percent.3 Such growth rates are generally considered unrealistic. While the defense budget had grown substantially in real terms from 1981 through 1985 (some say by 37%, others 50 to 55% depending on how the calculations were made and what values were assigned to inflation), it actually decreased 10 to 11% afterward to 1989, reflecting pressures to rein in the overall national deficit. As one "Republican staffer" put it, "The Pentagon should feel real happy to get zero real growth [in FY 1990]. They haven't had that for several years."4

Also relevant is that the Pentagon during the Weinberger era put in hand ambitious plans and programs based on highly optimistic assumptions of the government's ability and willingness to pay. As one writer put it during the Presidential campaign, Weinberger set out to build a 100 story skyscraper but the budget will now allow only 65 floors to be built. The "dreary task of partially

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3. Data are drawn from a Prudential-Bache Securities Inc. study on projected defense spending contained in David C. Morrison, "Defense: the Fiscal Vise," National Journal, September 24, 1988, p. 2372. Secretary Carlucci emphasized the same point. See George Wilson, "Carlucci Warns on No-Growth Budgets; US Forces Abroad Would Have to Be Cut, Secretary Says," Washington Post, November 29, 1988, p. 8. Former Defense Secretaries Brown and Schlesinger agree. See Charlotte Saikowski, "Bush to Face Tough Choices on Defense," Christian Science Monitor, November 16, 1988, p. 1.

4. As quoted in David Rapp, "Budget-Making to Be and Insider's Art This Year," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, January 14, 1989, p. 65.

dismantling and redesigning Weinberger's ...skyscraper...is being left to the next Administration."5

The "next Administration" is here, and it must decide to what degree it will accept or modify Reagan Administration decisions in many areas. One area is modernization of land-based ballistic missiles. The Reagan Pentagon favored building 50 rail-mobile MX, estimated to cost $12 billion, as the cheapest way to build a desired inventory of 500 warheads on a presumably survivable land system. Because the system might require relatively long warning and reaction time, and because each missile would carry ten warheads (making each a highly attractive target as well as a highly potent weapon if launched first), some see rail basing as inadequate and destabilising and favor alternatives such as the single warhead road-mobile Midgetman. The problem is that 500 warhead Midgetman force would cost $39 billion. A third alternative is hiding and shuttling a small number of missiles in among 2300 "cheap silos" with another 2300 decoys. Depending on the missile employed, costs could range from $24 to 40 billion. Other alternatives have been suggested, and a Congressional deadline for the Bush Administration to reach a decision, originally scheduled for February 15, has at the Administration's request been pushed back to the Spring.

Other issues are whether to modify the B-2 bomber program which presently calls for purchasing 132 planes at a

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5. Morrison, op. cit. at note 3, p. 2372.

currently-estimated expenditure of $68 billion. Escalating costs and technical problems are forcing reconsideration of how to proceed, and the decision will be linked to a review of the B-1B situation. In April 1988 the last of a 100 airplane buy entered Strategic Air Command service, but the entire B-1B force already requires major modifications. Three airplanes have been lost, and the remainder cannot accomplish with high confidence do what they were designed for: penetrating enemy air defenses at low altitudes. "Correcting these problems will not be a short-term effort" nor will it be cheap: if planned and proposed funding remains unchanged, nearly $1 billion will be spent on B-1 modifications in FY 1988 through FY 1991 alone.6

SDI remains a major issue. Depending on the type of system deployed, cost estimates have ranged from many tens to hundreds of billions. Not counting Energy Department costs, nearly $15 billion has already been spent and another $5.6 is programmed for FY 1990 unless President Bush decides otherwise.

Other programs to be subjected to close scrutiny the C17 transport (projected to cost one half billion each when research, spare parts, and hangar costs are included), Seawolf submarines (about $1 to 1.5 billion each), cancellation of two aircraft carriers now in construction and early retirement of operational carriers (three are

6. Secretary of Defense Frank C. Carlucci, Annual Report to the Congress Fiscal Year 1990 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, January 17, 1989), pp. 189-190.

immediate candidates so as to forestall overhaul, repair, or operations costs), Aegis cruisers ($750 million each), Trident submarines (1.3 billion each), the Advanced Tactical Fighter (up to $100 billion to meet USAF and USN projected needs), and the LHX helicopter (a $35 billion Army program).

Entering into the decision process will be judgments about security threats. A Soviet Union lowering its threat profile to the outside world is causing a reconsideration of much of the rationale underlying Western defense programs. The Reagan Administration has left it to the Bush team to articulate an official response to this change and to coordinate it with allies. The Bush people will be doing so at a time when other possibilities are readily available to fill perceptual voids. This is well-illustrated in an article by Frank Carlucci after he stepped down as Defense Secretary. While acknowledging that the world may be entering a "new era", he argued for continued strong defense because of "three central challenges sure to face policy-makers in the 1990s": "the emergence of new and more worrisome security threats from many points on the compass"; "the persistence of the Soviet threat"; and the "growing tendency toward conflict arising from economic competition."7 His article is interesting not only because it highlights non-Soviet threats, but also because the Soviet challenge--the near-sole justification for a $1.8 trillion buildup in the Reagan years--is not even mentioned

7. Carlucci, "No Time To Change US Defense Policy," New York Times, January 27, 1989, p. 31.

first.

His reference to conflict arising from economic competition, furthermore, raises the issue of possible changes in willingness to maintain military commitments, for America's most significant economic competitors are the nations to which it is committed. Further progress in resolving the trade deficit issue with Japan should become increasingly difficult to attain, and with both South Korea and post-1992 Europe, economic competition will surely grow worse before it gets better. As these allies have exhibited heightened prosperity, furthermore, calls have increased in the US Congress and media for a greater sharing of the collective defense burden, and they will continue to increase as the US tackles the defense budget problems adumbrated above. If one overlays on all of this disagreement with allies on how to deal with Soviet and "Third World" challenges, then the Bush Administration inevitably will have to contend with a Congress increasingly skeptical of the value of the security commitments made to the allies as well as the value of the commitments made by them.

The above issues will be at the heart of a debate about the deployment of American forces abroad. That the United States should withdraw troops from Europe or Asia has been a recurring but never to now a persuasive theme in American defense deliberations. It has been an issue raised more in the legislative than in the executive branch of the American

Government. Mike Mansfield's yearly proposals for withdrawal when he was in the Senate eventually became ritualized and almost empty of meaning. Representative Patricia Schroeder followed in Mansfield's footsteps in offering cutback amendments, also without success. On the executive side, only President Carter in 1977 offered a major proposal--this to bring troops home from Korea, but it elicited such strong negative reaction that he never raised it again.

The situation may be different in the 1990s. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, Margo D. B. Carlisle, has remarked about the "unpleasant sentiment in [Congressional cloakrooms] that is resentful of NATO and Japan".8 Schroeder and others predict that the resentment will increase as budget choices become more and more difficult. She has called on the Administration to "get out front" on the issue, otherwise "Congress, she has said, will get into it, and it'll be like doing surgery with a hatchet."9 The surgery may have already begun as Schroeder, a liberal Democrat, and Congressman Andy Ireland of Florida, a conservative Republican, have introduced legislation which would require the withdrawal of all civilian and military personnel who are stationed in Europe and who service weapons eliminated by the INF Treaty.

Congressional developments have no doubt contributed to

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8. As quoted in David Morrison, "Fortress Europe Who Should Pay for Its Defense," Government Executive, February, 1989, p. 20.
9. Ibid.

the view of many in the defense policy community that some forces abroad will be reduced and be converted to reserves. One reporter, for example, interviewed numerous US and allied military leaders in Europe, and he found that they, including the commander of US European ground forces, "are anticipating cuts in US forces in Germany within the next five years."10 In December 1988 Secretary Carlucci told the NATO defense ministers that some American forces might have to be withdrawn if there was less than two percent real growth in the US defense budget.11 This is not inconsistent with the view, mentioned earlier, that the quality, size and deployment of US forces cannot remain level without real increases of three to five percent in the budget. Former Navy Secretary James Webb has forcefully argued that the policy of permanently maintaining American troops in Western Europe is "an historical anomaly" which must be done away with.12 Others make similar arguments about US troops in Korea, and, not totally coincidental, the Koreans are themselves demanding a lower US military profile in their country.13

One factor which would serve as a brake on withdrawing

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10. Peter Almond, "NATO Officers Expect Slashes in US Forces," Washington Times, September 21, 1988, p. 1.
11. Wilson, "Carlucci Warns on No Growth Budgets," op.cit. at note 3, p.8.
12. Webb, "Bring the Boys Home," Washington Post, January 8, 1989, p. C2.
13. See, e.g., Amos Jordan and William J. Taylor, "Cut US Troops in Korea Now," New York Times, December 2, 1988, p31, and Susan Moffett, "Koreans Demanding Equality on Defense; US Too wants Lower Profile for its Troops, Wall Street Journal, September 28, 1988, p. 20.

forces would be the degree to which they would serve as bargaining chips in arms control negotiations. The Bush Administration inherited a very full package of arms talks issues. These include strategic arms reduction (START), nuclear weapons testing, restrictions on chemical weapons, a ban on anti-satellite systems, and confidence-building and force reductions in Europe. In addition, Gorbachev has called for naval arms discussions, but whether they occur remains to be seen.

The choices facing the Bush Administration here are almost bewildering complex. Overarching issues include the priority to be given to arms agreements overall and in each of the areas, the speed at which START and other agreements should be completed, the establishment of common alliance positions, the framing of arms treaties acceptable to 67 Senators needed to ratify, and the degree of linkage to be established between different arms control areas, between arms control and US defense procurement, planning, and employment, and between arms negotiations or agreements and Soviet international behavior.

The recent history of START provides an excellent example of the pressures facing the Bush Administration not only in nuclear arms control per se but also in land-based missile modernization, SDI, nuclear SLCMs, and the reduction of conventional forces in Europe. Of all the areas of arms control, the expectations for a quick settlement are highest for START. One may recall that in early 1988 many believed

that a draft START treaty could be signed before Ronald Reagan left office.14 In particular, what had been considered to be the main stumbling block--differences of view about allowable experimentation for SDI within the context of the 1972 ABM Treaty--was finessed through ambiguous compromise language agreed upon in December 1987. The compromise reflected both a gradual de facto scaling back by Reagan Administration of the grandiose goals originally set for SDI (largely in recognition that they were unachievable in any affordable system) coupled with the Soviets' (possibly having the same recognition) moving toward a position aimed not so much at killing SDI development as at hampering it as much as possible.

Yet, with SDI put aside at least temporarily, other obstacles arose. Primary was a lack of American consensus about the makeup of the nation's strategic arsenal in light of the INF agreement and a START process. The latter had already resulted in agreement to limit both sides to 1600 launchers, to 6000 warheads with a maximum of 4900 on ballistic missiles, and the like. Important "details" remained to be resolved, particularly the status of mobile ICBMs and of SLCMs, accountability provisions for air-launched cruise missiles, and verification procedures. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and numerous influential individuals such as Senator Nunn, Henry Kissinger, and Brent Scowcroft had gone on record that, depending upon what strategic

14. See Strobe Talbott, "Why START Stopped," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Fall 1988), pp. 49-69.

programs are put in hand, START could result in the USA being more vulnerable to attack. For instance, while the official US position in the negotiations was that mobile ICBMs ought to be banned, some within the Government, most notably the Joint Chiefs, remained convinced that guaranteeing US invulnerability required adoption of a mobile land-based missiles. Without them, they felt, deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) would become the sole guarantors against surprise attack. Especially discomforting to many was that a United States abiding by START limitations might normally find itself with only 12 SLBM submarines at sea at any one time. In view of all these concerns, the JCS Chairman, Admiral William Crowe, "repeatedly warned the president in early 1988 that it would be a mistake even to try to complete a START Treaty until the United States had a much clearer idea of what ICBM program made military, political and economic sense. Various influential voices outside the Administration, notably including Senator Nunn's, echoed that caution."15

Overlapping with the mobile missile question in START is that of land-attack SLCMs. Opposing the American view that they ought not be addressed in the initial START, the Soviets have proposed an overall limit of 1000 missiles with a sub-limit of 400 nuclear-armed. This is unacceptably low to those in the US (and Europe as well) who see nuclear SLCMs as augmenting both general nuclear deterrence,

15. Ibid., p. 60.

especially in the absence of mobile land-based ICBMs, and conventional European deterrence by substituting for the missiles banned in the INF agreement. While many in the US Navy, furthermore, would happily live without nuclear cruise missiles, they are strongly wedded to conventional ones. This would not be a difficulty except that many say it is not possible to distinguish between the nuclear and conventional variants without inspections so intrusive as to incite vehement opposition in both superpower navies. Since a total ban would be easier to verify, many who see the US as highly vulnerable to SLCM attack readily agree to the elimination of both variants. Somewhat out of character, the Pentagon has proposed that each side simply accept the other side's declaration as to the number of nuclear and conventional SLCMs without regard for verification. This seems somewhat pointless and runs against the clear insistence of both the Reagan White House and important members of Congress that no arms treaty be accepted without assurances on verification.

Finally, there are those who would, in effect, hold START hostage until conventional arms reduction in Europe are agreed upon as well. This position is said to be popular "[a]mong key southern democrats, among their Republican colleagues generally, and in the ranks of former high government officials".16 The argument is that the INF Treaty has left Europe more exposed than ever before

16. Jack Beatty, "Reagan's Gift," The Atlantic, February, 1989, p. 59.

to the threat of conventional Warsaw Pact ground superiority, and that there is little possibility that NATO will build up its own conventional forces to deal with the problem. Hence, NATO should aim to force down Warsaw Pact superiority by linking progress in START to progress in conventional arms control.

Opposed to the above argument are those who urge quick completion and ratification of a START Treaty lest it fall victim to exogenous events (the Afghan invasion being one reason, for example, for the downfall of SALT II) or to internicine battles in the US as factions argue, not only over its merits narrowly defined, but also over its impact on defense allocations. These advocates fear as well that a slowing of the START process might adversely affect superpower relations and the relations of the US with its allies, who have been led to expect progress. Many also fear that a world without START, i.e., one which leaves both sides unconstrained as to what to build, would only see the piling up of additional weapons.

Finally, a factor cutting across all these issues is American public opinion. A Gallup poll of 2000 people, who submitted to hour long interviews in early 1989, showed that a "wide margin," including "the most conservative and anti-communist,...target the Pentagon for large spending cuts when asked to size up the federal budget in light of the deficit." A majority, furthermore, "favored the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea and Europe as cost-savings

measures."17 Presidents are sensitive to public opinion. Congressmen, especially those elected every two years, are even more sensitive on a day-to-day basis. They can afford to be on defense matters because they do not have the President's responsibility to react quickly to events, to implement policy, to negotiate with allies on defense commitments or with competitors in arms talks. Hence, it is not surprising that both Congressional Democrats and Republicans seem generally more inclined to cut back on defense expenditures (except those which directly benefit their constituents) and military commitments than does the President.

As will be dealt with further below, however, the present President shows himself to be particularly sensitive to one segment of the public, the political right, and it is among the right's more ideological segments that the greatest public support for highly robust defense is found. In short, a majority of the public may favor reducing defense expenditures and commitments, but an important element relative to this President generally continues to think otherwise.

BUSH AND THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM

17. Paul West, "Public Aims at Pentagon in Poll of Cutback Wishes," Baltimore Sun, March 9, 1989, p. 13.

While George Bush has shown a capacity for stubbornness (as evidenced, for example, in his insistence on Tower for Defense Secretary in the face of much pressure to the contrary), his approach to political problems is generally that of a problem-solving pragmatist or compromiser with a right-of-center perspective. He is not a radical conservative, but, as argued above, he is very sensitive about maintaining his base of support in the right. Conservatives, in turn, are sensitive to his compromising nature, fearing that he may settle for less than they would desire.

His appointments which centrally or peripherally impinge on national security policy-making reflect both his orientation and his concern to please the right. Vice-President, Dan Quayle, touted as something of a specialist in national defense, is well-accepted among conservatives though it must be said that he is not highly influential. John Sununu, a tough manager and a highly respected conservative, may as White House chief of staff have some impact on defense. It is almost certainly be marginal, however; Sununu has no background in defense matters. Another with no defense background but who will have significant impact on all areas of government is the budget director, Richard Darman. An alumnus of the Nixon, Ford, and Reagan administrations, he is unsurpassed in the President's entourage for his knowledge of the intricacies

of the budget and the President relies on him heavily. His chief task is to formulate budgets with progressively lower deficits. He is a protege of Secretary of State James Baker and "[l]ike Baker, Darman has built a reputation as a mainstream Republican moderate, a political pragmatist who is always willing to negotiate."18

His mentor, James Baker, is widely accepted not only as a political pragmatist but also as the President's chief confidant and a very close personal friend from Bush's Texas days. His influence with Bush personally, his official authority as Secretary of State, and his proven pragmatic nature unnerve the political right, but Baker is politically astute and will strive to insure that Bush not alienate that base of support.

While Baker will have much to say on overall foreign policy, the key figure in the Bush Administration on defense per se is the national security advisor and director of the National Security council staff, Brent Scowcroft. A retired Air Force lieutenant general, a Columbia Ph.D. in international relations, and a close associate of Henry Kissinger, Scowcroft worked in the White House from 1972 through January 1977. He is unusual in that he is now in his second tour as national security advisor, having previously served in that capacity under President Ford. He is regarded as a "consensus builder" and "honest broker"

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18. David Rapp, "Darman To Head White House Budget Office," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, November 26, 1988, p. 3388.

with a "track record of courting bipartisan congressional support for presidential policies."19

Of all the people directly advising Bush, Scowcroft is the most knowledgeable on security matters. His views are extensively developed and coherent, and he comes particularly well-prepared in that immediately prior to the election he co-authored together with James Woolsey, a Democrat, that portion of the American Agenda project devoted to national security. The project, a bipartisan effort chaired by former Presidents Carter and Ford, brought together memoranda on the critical national issues specifically written for presentation to the winning Presidential candidate.

An indication of the power Scowcroft is anticipated to wield is seen in the willingness of a former State Department official, Arnold Kanter, to work for Scowcroft as senior director on the NSC staff for arms control and defense policy. Kanter, a moderate on arms control, reportedly could have become director of the Bureau of Politico-Military affairs at State, but chose to go to the NSC instead. "His decision may reflect a calculation that the security council will play a central role in shaping arms control policy."20

In the President's immediate entourage, the only

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19. John Felton, "Scowcroft Returns as National Security Advisor," Congressional Quarterly, November 26, 1988, p. 3389.
20. "Security Council Post," New York Times, March 3, 1989, p. A16.

serious "competitor", so to speak, to Scowcroft in knowledge of defense matters would have been John Tower. Bush's nomination of Tower, a fellow Texan and ally for over two decades, served at least two purposes. It pleased the right wing since Tower is a strong conservative, and it allowed Mr. Bush to reward a close political friend since Tower energetically and consistently supported Bush's political career.

Tower had been chairman of the Armed Services Committee as a US Senator from Texas, and built a reputation as a strong proponent of Pentagon programs and budget requests. Indeed, his reputation was such as to cause Bush to make his offer conditional on Tower's allowing the White House to choose his Deputy Secretary of Defense. The Bush people wanted someone from the business community with a proven record for efficiently managing a large organization. Chosen for the post was Donald J. Atwood, vice chairman of the General Motors Corporation.

Richard Cheney, Tower's successor as nominee, was the Republican party whip in the House of Representative. Former chief of staff in the Ford White House, he too is a moderate conservative with a reputation for seeking consensus. He has never served in the military nor on any military committees in the Congress, and, by his own admission, is not a defense specialist. His quick approval as Secretary of Defense filled a vacuum, but he may not be a significant force in defense policy-making in the near term.

Two other nominees to posts worth mentioning are Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Burt. Wolfowitz is now ambassador to Indonesia and former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from 1982 to 1986. He will presumably be Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, the post formerly held by Fred Ikle. Burt is US ambassador to the FRG and before that held high level State Department jobs, including Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs. He is to be the US's chief negotiator for START. Both men fit into the mold of moderate conservatives. Wolfowitz is described as a man who held "decidedly hawkish views but gradually moderated them during...15 years of government service when he grappled directly with some of the thorniest issues, particularly US-Soviet arms reduction."21 Burt is a "`pragmatic', or flexible, conservative on arms control matters". He frequently disagreed with Richard Perle, probably the top Pentagon arms control official during the Weinberger years. Perle viewed Burt as "more inclined to make compromises" and as "worried more about whether our proposals would be considered fair."22

In sum, Bush's team reflects, for the most part, his own right-of-center pragmatic orientation. Because of Bush's concern to maintain conservative support, he and his appointees can be expected to give full consideration to

21. George Wilson, "Wolfowitz Likely To Return to Pentagon," Washington Post, January 24, 1989, p. 14.
22. R. Jeffrey Smith, "Burt Chosen To Head Strategic Arms Talk," Washington Post, February 3, 1989, p. 23.

what conservatives would prefer. In light of the budget and other difficulties outlined earlier, however, pragmatism may be a very important characteristic of the Bush team.

Let us now turn to what the prominent members of the team, especially the President and Scowcroft, have said about preferred defense policy.

POTENTIAL POLICY POSITIONS

When Vice-President, Mr. Bush was a loyal and enthusiastic supporter of Reagan defense policies, including SDI. During the campaign and after his election, he vowed he would "not sacrifice American preparedness and...not compromise American strength, " but he was and has generally avoided specifics.23 For example, during the campaign he continually sidestepped questions as to which defense procurement programs, if any, he would scale back or eliminate in order to save funds. Similarly after becoming President, he postponed resumption of START talks and asked for a delay in informing Congress about whether moneys earmarked earlier for development of a mobile land based missile should be spent on MX or on Midgetman. He did propose a $300.4 billion defense budget for FY 1990, arrived at by postulating zero real growth in the previous year's total, but he left it to the Defense Department to suggest within 60 days where specific cuts should be made to meet

23. President's Budget Address to the Congress, February 9, 1989.

that spending limit. He said he would propose 1% growth for 1991 and again for 1992 and 2% for 1993, but provided no specific justification.

Rather, Mr. Bush is deliberately keeping his options open, and he intends to do so until the completion of a comprehensive National Security Council review of American defense and arms control options. Scowcroft is personally directing the effort, to be completed in late April, and it would be surprising if it does not contain many of the ideas which he laid out in his American Agenda memorandum and in statements he has made in other fora.

Summarized below are the views of the President. Scowcroft, and others relative to defense expenditures and general cost saving measures, strategic systems programs, conventional weapons programs, and both nuclear and conventional arms control.

Defense expenditures and general cost-saving measures

It is appropriate to begin with the question of expenditures, for if Congress holds to the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law as presently conceived and if the President holds to his pledge of no new taxes, then sequestration of funds may be inevitable to meet the deficit targets in 1991 and later. It would thus become impossible to maintain level defense funding (i.e., zero growth plus inflation) much less increase the defense budget. Additionally, because the President "would like to postpone until next year [1990] the question of how to meet the $64 billion

deficit target for the fiscal year 1991"24, defense planning will remain tentative, subject to potentially serious disruptions as the Administration and Congress seek to cope with, and probably argue about, the deficit.

The President has publicly endorsed "stretchouts" and greater Pentagon efficiency as money-saving measures.25 The former entail reducing yearly expenditures for research, development, and procurement of specific weapons or systems while increasing the number of years over which expenditures will be made. Over the long term this will probably increase the total cost of the individual weapons or systems programs, but deficit targets are yearly events where immediate savings are at issue. The President hopes, moreover, that through greater Pentagon efficiency, both procurement spending and the overall costs of running the defense establishment can be reduced. He has indicated his intent to implement the recommendations made three years ago by the Packard Commission for streamlining the management of the Pentagon.

The President's advisors and appointees have echoed his endorsements of "stretchouts" and efficiencies. Both Scowcroft and a small analysis team assembled by Tower have additionally concluded that major programs would have to be cancelled and personnel eliminated from the defense

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24. Rosenbaum, op.cit. at note 1, p. D22.
25. See, e.g., the President's statements in the Presidential debates as well as his interview in Time, January 30, 1989, p. 26.

payroll.26 Scowcroft sees these measures and reductions as well in readiness and sustainability as leading to "substantial early savings."27

Land-base missile modernization

During the campaign the President strongly insisted on the need for nuclear modernization, and he nearly always linked that thought with maintaining pressure on the Soviets in START. When asked in the second Presidential debate which defense programs he would cancel in order to save money, the President turned his answer to nuclear programs and said:

> [W]e're in serious stages of negotiation with the Soviet Union now in the strategic arms control talks, and we are protecting a couple of options [MX and Midgetman] in terms of modernizing our strategic forces. My Secretary of Defense is going to have to make a very difficult decision in which system to go forward with. But we are protecting both of them, and we're moving forward with negotiations, and, you see, it would be dumb negotiating policy with the Soviets to cut out one or the other of the two options right now.

The President's statement is ambiguous: while he talks of the Defense Secretary choosing between systems, he also speaks as if he desires to keep both systems alive as long as negotiations continue. He seemed to adopt the latter position in the first Presidential debate when, in criticizing Mr. Dukakis, he said, "Now we're sitting down and talking to the Soviets about strategic arms, and he

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26. See, e.g., George Wilson, "Tower Defense Scheme: Budget Cuts in Exchange for Free Hand," Washington Post, March 10, 1989, p. 20 and "To: The President-elect, From: Brent Scowcroft and R. James Woolsey, Subject: Defense and Arms Control Policy," p. 8.
27. Scowcroft and Woolsey, op.cit. at note 26, p. 8.

wants to do away with the Midgetman and the MX, the modernization of our nuclear ...capability. That is not the way you deal with the Soviets....These people are tough."

START negotiations, however, are on hold until the defense review is completed, and, according to a recent news article paraphrasing the Secretary of State, "The Administration does not want to resume the...talks until it has a better idea of exactly what type of strategic missile system--whether the highly mobile Midgetman or a less mobile MX option--it intends to deploy." 28

This position is consistent with that expressed by Scowcroft in his American Agenda memorandum. He argued that the most important initial defense decision facing the President is whether or not to go forward with a mobile survivable land-base missile, be it MX, Midgetman, or some combination.29 He calls for an early decision because so much else, including positions the US should adopt in START, would flow from it.

His criteria for decision is its impact on stability, i.e., the prevention of nuclear war. Seeing stability as requiring a survivable nuclear retaliatory capability, he is uncomfortable with relying on ballistic missile submarines as the ultimate guarantors of deterrence: "Under current planning and the restrictions of a START Treaty, there will only be twelve or so of these boats at sea once the Trident

28. Thomas L. Friedman, "Baker Plans Visit to Moscow in May To Discuss Summit," New York Times, March 8, 1989, p. A6.
29. Scowcroft and Woolsey, op. cit. at note 26, pp. 3-4.

submarine force fully replaces the older boats. They will carry...some 2300 warheads. But this is many eggs in very few baskets."30 He would add mobile land-based baskets, but not rail-garrison MX, considering it unsatisfactory against surprise attack since it would "require several hours of strategic warning, and a quick reaction to that warning, to make...mobility effective."31

He sees the "carry-hard" scheme or a road-mobile ICBM such as Midgetman as having better potential, and his view is alleged to be widely accepted by many in the Washington defense policy community, including influential members of the Senate and House Armed Services committees.32 Reminiscent of what the President seemed to be advocating in the campaign, Scowcroft accepts that "more than one of these options might be kept alive by pursuing them at a gradual pace"; this would allow the US to move forward in START without first committing itself to one specific mobile missile.33

It may be significant that, shortly before his nomination was rejected, John Tower reportedly was ready to back a compromise solution which involved a new road-based missile termed "Midiman."34 In contrast to the single-

30. Ibid., p.3.
31. Ibid.
32. Paul Mann, "Defense Leaders Line Up with Scowcroft on Midgetman and Carry-Hard Basing," Aviation Week and Space Technology, February 6, 1989, pp. 23-24.
33. Scowcroft and Woolsey, op. cit. at note 26, p. 3.
34. Peter Almond, "If Confirmed, Tower Will Make Big, Sudden Waves at the Pentagon," Washington Times, March 8, 1989, p. 4.

warhead Midgetman, each Midiman would have three warheads, thereby necessitating a smaller number of missiles overall in order to achieve the desired 500 warhead level. Because Tower had supported the rail-carried MX, its deployment may well have been part of his compromise solution.

The B-2 Bomber

The general expectation throughout the Washington policy community is for a slowdown in the development and production of the B-2 bomber. This will yield yearly savings and provide time to resolve difficulties in a program on the cutting edges of several new technologies. Tower was prepared to support this policy had he become Secretary. 35

Nuclear SLCMs

Among the President's appointees, only Scowcroft has publicly addressed the SLCM issue in any detail. His position is linked to his argument on survivable land-based ICBMs. If the option of a highly survivable land-based system were rejected (which does not seem to be the case), he believes that nuclear SLCMs might be worth deploying in order to complicate Soviet targeting of a surprise attack. Otherwise, he is "not convinced that, in the long run,[they] would be advantageous to the United States." 36 In his American Agenda report, he said:

The difficulty of verifying SLCM limitations, the

35. Ibid,
36. As quoted in "The Views of Brent Scowcroft," Washington Post, November 24, 1988, p. 28.

> foreign policy problems with allies (e.g., Japan) if the locations of nuclear SLCMs are publicly identified, the importance of conventional warhead cruise missiles (which could be affected by some types of proposed limits on nuclear ones), and possible NATO reliance on nuclear SLCMs...in the aftermath of the INF Treaty are all complicating factors in arriving at a decision on nuclear-armed SLCMs. To some, these factors suggest that there should be no, or very limited, SLCM restrictions....To others, especially if the US deploys a survivable ICBM, and given the domestic asymmetries favoring the USSR, these factors indicate the wisdom of a ban or limits on nuclear armed SLCMs.37

Scowcroft is in this second group. He would not, however, do away with conventional warhead SLCMs since, as will be discussed below, he sees them as useful for power projection.

Strategic defense initiative

Wall Street Journal reporters who studied the defense views of the candidates during the election wrote that Mr. Bush's rhetoric on SDI "waffle[d] between unbridled enthusiasm and cautious interest."38 This remained the case after the election. For example, the President said in a budget speech to the Congress on 9 February that he would "vigorously pursue the Strategic Defense Initiative," yet on 21 February at a press conference a reporter pointed out that the budget director, Richard Darman, made SDI "conditional on the outcome" of the defense policy review headed up by Scowcroft. As a result, the reporter asked, "Is it or is it not conditional, and would you rule out curtailing the protection to an accidental launch protection

37. Scowcroft and Woolsey, op. cit. at note 26, p. 4.
38. Gerald Seib and Tim Carrington, "Bush Attacks Dukakis on Defense, But Deficit Will Tie Either's Hands," Wall Street Journal, September 13, 1988, p. 1.

system?" The President responded:

> I'm not ruling anything in or not. I have stated my support for the principle of SDI. I have not favored what some would call premature deployment, but on the other hand I will be very interested in seeing what this overall review comes up with. And I'm not going to close any doors or open any in regards to this or any other systems. We're going to have to make some tough choices on defense. I'm aware of that and so let's wait and see what the review produces.39

John Tower probably reflected the Administration's view at the start of his nomination hearings by indicating that it was "unrealistic" to expect to have an impenetrable shield protecting the nation from ballistic missile attack.40 He intended as one of his first tasks to review the SDI budget and particularly the Reagan plan to raise SDI research funding by 50% in FY 1990. He evidently was willing to settle for level funding instead.41 On whether the US should adopt a "broad" interpretation of the ABM Treaty in order to allow testing which would otherwise be forbidden, he declared that a decision did not yet have to be made, and that "anything we might anticipate doing in the near future could be done consistent with the narrow interpretation."42

Scowcroft, profoundly skeptical of SDI, does not see a narrow interpretation as hindering US SDI testing for up to

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39. "Transcript of President's News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Issues," New York Times, February 22, 1989, p. A16.
40. Bob Davis and Tim Carrington, "`Star Wars' Defense Is Being Scaled Back to More Feasible Plan," Wall Street Journal, January 31, 1989, p. 1.
41. Almond, op. cit. at note 34, p. 4.
42. Andrew Rosenthal, "Tower Declares `Star Wars' Shield Can't Be Completed," New York Times, January 27, 1989, p. A12.

ten years. "Even a deployment of limited size," he has written, "would be a substantial...program that would need to be assessed in the context of other major defense needs."43 He offers as example that failure to develop a survivable land-based missile would justify moving forward on a vigorous SDI program unconstrained by the ABM Treaty.

Strategic command and control improvements

Improvements in strategic command and control are mentioned here separately because of the emphasis Scowcroft accords them in the Agenda memorandum. He says that the "first, and in many ways most important, strategic military issue for a President," is, "the command and control of strategic forces."44 The system he advocates has several features: a President would immediately and without error be notified of an attack and of its size and nature; he would be able to communicate whenever necessary with his military forces, the American people, allies, and adversaries; finally, he and his successors would be so secure as to cause an adversary to forego a decapitation attack. The system would have to achieve, Scowcroft adds, "a perfection that is unique in human endeavor," making it, no doubt, very expensive indeed. Surveillance and communications systems are particularly vulnerable to nuclear effects, and hardening and redundancy are notoriously costly.

START

Both the President and Secretary of State have affirmed

43. Scowcroft and Woolsey, op. cit. at note 26, p. 5.
44. Ibid., p. 1.

that they will press forward in START as soon as the defense review is completed in late April. There is no indication that the Administration will hold START hostage to Soviet assurances about conventional arms reductions, but there are clear indications that the US may modify its START position to make it politically acceptable to Congress.45

Decisions made on strategic force modernization, nuclear SLCMs, and SDI will to a large degree determine US positions when START resume. In particular, decisions to go forward with a land-mobile ICBM or to forego nuclear SLCMs will mean modifying positions put forward by Reagan negotiators.

A major uncertainty is the Bush Administration's approach to verification. The previous Administration had earlier proposed to ban mobile missiles, for example, because of verification difficulties. Verification is a also a major stumbling block to limiting nuclear SLCMs, especially if conventional SLCMs remain. Many Senators will not approve a draft treaty without assurances on monitoring compliance. All that can be said at this time is that both Baker and Scowcroft have emphasized the need to hammer out an agreement acceptable to two-thirds of the US Senate.

Conventional weapons programs

While campaigning the President was quite laudatory of

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45. See Friedman, op. cit. at note 25, p. A6 and Don Oberdorfer and Robert J. McCartney, "Baker Voices Concern over START Pact," Washington Post, February 13, 1989, p. 1.

the "competitive strategies " process, though he did not provide details concerning it.46 Developed within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, it aims to identify how the US can capitalize on its technological advantages and on Soviet vulnerabilities so as to prevail in a non-nuclear conflict. Computerized Pentagon war games for refining and testing alternative recommendations are a central feature of this approach, which some regard as a "powerful management tool to evaluate not only proposed new weapons systems but the uniformed services' traditional roles and missions as well." 47 The uniformed services are reportedly "trying to scuttle" the "competitive strategies" program, but the JCS Chairman, Admiral William Crowe, is said to be more supportive than individual service chiefs.48 It is unclear where the process stands at this point, and how much it or recommendations associated with it will enter into the Scowcroft-led defense review.

In the American Agenda, Scowcroft did single out some conventional forces cost-savings options.49 These were the transition of active units (especially ground) to reserve or cadre status, a reduction in the level of distant operations by aircraft carriers, heavier reliance on smaller ships or submarines carrying conventional cruise missiles for

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46. See, e.g., the transcript of the second Presidential debate.
47. "Fighting Smart, Not Rich," Newsweek, November 14, 1988, p. 24.
48. John Broder, "Joint Chiefs Held Trying To Scuttle Plan Backed by Bush," Los Angeles Times, December 10, 1988. p. 28.
49. Scowcroft and Woolsey, op. cit. at note 26, pp. 8-9.

forward-deployed naval power, and employment of tactical missiles and unmanned vehicles instead of manned aircraft in various circumstances.

Before his Senate rejection, Tower's views varied somewhat from Scowcroft's in that he was evidently willing to eliminate smaller ships so as to help insure that aircraft carriers be retained. He was also willing to cut back seven Army divisions and some USAF air wings in the US with some or all going to the reserves, but he opposed reducing forces in Europe in light of upcoming arms control talks with the Warsaw Pact.50

Neither the President nor any of his appointees has recently advocated a goal so often advanced in the Reagan years: that of a "600 ship" Navy. It was widely accepted that there will be fewer ships. The policy battle will be over the makeup of rather than the numbers in the fleet.

Conventional arms reduction talks

Even before the defense review is completed, the Administration has already entered into a new round of conventional arms reduction talks. These formally opened on March 6 in Vienna, and since they involve 35 states in all, the Bush team may have felt it politically too difficult to seek a postponement until the review is completed. In addition, the talks will probably move at such a pace that no major decisions will be required from Washington prior to the review's completion.

50. Almond, op. cit. at note 34, p. 4.

In any case, NATO's position, including that of Washington, is to move slowly and to avoid being overawed by bold Soviet proposals and initiatives such as contained in Gorbachev's UN announcement of unilateral cuts in Soviet forces. At the opening of the Vienna talks, e.g., Secretary Baker "repeatedly tried to take the political offensive in the struggle...for European public opinion by challenging Mr. Gorbachev...to put more substance behind his `new thinking'."51

His argument was in line with that urged by Scowcroft in the American Agenda memorandum. He characterized conventional arms reductions as one way to improve the European balance and particularly to limit Warsaw Pact potential for a successful blitzkrieg. He also opined that confidence-building measures such as monitoring rail junctions, airfields, and crossroads "might ultimately prove to be surprisingly practical and useful".52

The Administration fully supports the NATO positions that the talks be restricted to forces which can take and hold ground--i.e., tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery, that NATO and the Warsaw Pact accept limits at levels which are slightly below what NATO has but much higher than what the Warsaw Pact possesses , and that naval and air forces not be subjects of negotiation. The Administration also accepts that more ambitious, but more

51. Thomas Friedman, "Soviets Propose Three-Stage Cuts in European Arms," New York Times, March 7, 1989, p. 1.
52. Scowcroft and Woolsey, op. cit. at note 26, p. 6.

ambiguous, Soviet proposals constitute serious bases for discussion. This is not surprising since both the NATO and the Pact agree on the principle of equality as the basis for force levels in key areas, on the level of cuts to be made in initial reductions, and on the need for extensive verification measures.

CONCLUSIONS

President Bush came into office determined to keep his options open on defense policy issues. Nevertheless, from what he and his advisors have said, it seems fairly certain that he will advocate development of a mobile-land based missile other than rail-garrison MX, a slowdown in SDI development, a narrow interpretation of the ABM Treaty, changes in the US position in START consistent with these policies, other changes in START as necessary to insure that a treaty contributing to stability also is ratifiable, the stretching out of the purchase and development of new weapons and other major programs, reforms in Pentagon management consistent with Packard Commission recommendations, and a cutback in active forces and personnel with the transfer of many of the units to reserve status. The Administration will argue that forces abroad (at least those in Europe) ought to be reduced only as part of an arms reduction process with the Warsaw Pact, but if necessary, token forces such as associated with intermediate

missiles may be brought back in order to dampen Congressional or public pressures.

In the end, the major driving factor will be the budget. Some conservatives may strongly urge the President to protect defense from budgetary reductions and relative to specific weapons programs they may win the day, but budgetary concerns are forcing other conservatives to consider reducing defense expenditures and withdrawing forces abroad. The President may be able to stave off some of the difficult deficit reduction decisions this year, but will be unable to do so for FY 1991 and beyond. Unable a plan is devised for resolving the deficit problem in the long term, all defense planning will remain tentative and open to disruption. Until then US military strength will rest on a shaky fiscal foundation and one unworthy of a great power.